

Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 201:

“I require a professional.”

Roy laughed softly. “Fine. I know I’m a clumsy man.”

“Yes,” I agreed. “And you should spend more time with your family.”

He nodded in acknowledgement.

That afternoon, he presented me with several profiles of highly qualified nurses from reputable agencies.

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I found a reason to reject each one.

The first, a woman with twenty years of experience, was “too clinical.” The second, a man with a specialty in sports injuries, had “an overly assertive demeanour.” The third, despite impeccable credentials, was “not a suitable fit.”

Eventually, Roy’s expression shifted to one of dawning comprehension.

“What about Miss Galloway?” he ventured.

“What about her?”

“Well, she’s your CAO. Her role is to work closely with you. And given that you sustained this injury on her behalf, it seems only logical that she should return the favour by assisting in your care.”

I said nothing, a tacit encouragement.

Roy continued, laying out his superficially logical argument. “She’s exceptionally detail-oriented, caring, and patient. She has already demonstrated her consideration.”

He was, of course, merely articulating the solution I had already arrived at but would not voice myself.

I gave a single, slow nod.

“I’ll call her,” Roy said.

My phone rang before he could.

It was my father. “Son! How are you holding up? Your mother’s furious you’d rather languish in that sterile penthouse than come home where we can properly look after you.”

“No, thank you, Father. I’m an adult. I can manage my own care.”

“Fine,” he grumbled. “But I’m sending over a nurse. One of the best. Former military medic.”

“That will not be necessary. I have already engaged someone.”

“Is that so?” He paused, and then his tone shifted into something more gossipy. “So, how’s the damsel in distress? The one you so chivalrously rescued?”

Of course he knew. The man was sharp in his boisterous way, perceptive beneath the loud exterior. He knew Vanessa Abrams was a stranger to me, and my presence at Cary Grant's old house that night could have only one explanation.

"She's recovering satisfactorily," I replied, careful to keep my voice neutral. I did not mention that she would soon be here, in my home, tending to me.

"So," he pressed, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial level, "when are you asking her out?"

Naturally, he knew me well enough to understand I would not have taken a blade for a woman without a significant, underlying motivation.

"I have no intention of asking her out immediately after saving her life," I stated aloud. "It would be taking advantage of the situation."

My father laughed, a rich, knowing sound. "So that's not a 'no,' then?"

I did not reply to that. Instead, I changed the subject.

"Regarding that dinner with the artist Mother suggested."

“What about it?”

“Could you inform Mother that my attendance will be impossible? Thank you.”

He laughed again, the sound full of paternal insight. “Leave it to me, son!”

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Chapter 202:

I was sitting in a coffee shop, staring into the middle distance, my mind a tangled mess.

I'd sigh one minute, then scowl the next. That dizzy, floaty feeling I'd had—the one that made me feel like I was walking on clouds after learning Lochlan had taken on the Abrams family for me, had protected me, had literally taken a knife for me—had evaporated completely.

Now, in the cold light of day, I realised I'd been an absolute idiot.

He'd saved me, he'd had my back, but that didn't mean we were equals.

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The boss was the boss. He could be kind and gentlemanly one moment, and then, if I said one wrong thing that brushed against his authority, he could turn razor-sharp and icily arrogant the next.

If I got hurt by that, it was my own fault for not knowing my place. I needed to be sharper, more clear-headed. I couldn't let his occasional kindness fool me into thinking he was approachable enough to be my friend.

And I absolutely, under no circumstances, could let myself indulge in the ridiculous fantasy that he might actually fancy me.

I looked up to see Leo. He was dressed in a cosy-looking dark green woollen jumper and jeans, the picture of youthful, approachable warmth against the early winter chill. It was a world away from tailored suits and silk ties.

“I didn’t actually expect you to call,” he said, sliding into the seat opposite me with an easy smile.

“Why’s that?” I asked, taking a sip of my coffee. “Don’t tell me you think I’m a snob who looks down on strippers.”

“No, not that,” he said, his smile turning a little more perceptive. “It’s just... when you looked at me the other night, you had this faraway look in your eyes. Like you were thinking about someone else entirely.”

“You’re wrong,” I said a little too quickly.

He just smiled, good-natured and unchallenging, and we moved on.

And to my surprise, we kept moving on—effortlessly.

It turned out we’d gone to the same university. Soon, we were deep in the kind of easy, nostalgic chat I hadn’t had in years, comparing notes on which dorm was supposedly haunted and voting on which lecturers, male and female, had been the campus heart-throbs.

It was fun, carefree, and blessedly uncomplicated.

I decided that even if I never slept with him, Leo would make for a genuinely good friend.

We moved from the coffee shop to a small Italian restaurant for dinner. My relief and joy were palpable when I discovered Leo shared my penchant for proper, carb-loaded food and wasn't a health nut.

In fact, he had a glorious sweet tooth.

We were sharing a ridiculously large portion of tiramisu, and I was actually considering my next move.

Invite him for a walk? A movie? Or, more daringly, up to my penthouse?

Would it be too forward to request a private, encore lap dance? If that was too much too soon, maybe we could do some of the stupidly touristy things I'd always secretly wanted to do but never had—like riding the London Eye.

I saw the damn thing every day, it was part of my city's skyline, and I'd never been on it. How ridiculous was that? Just because everyone said only tourists did it didn't mean I was barred for life, did it?

I'd only had a few bites of the tiramisu when my phone rang. I looked at the screen.

Roy.

I froze, the spoon still in my mouth. Most of the time, Roy was just Lochlan's mouthpiece.

I swallowed and answered. "Hi, Roy."

"Hyacinth, are you free this evening?"

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Chapter 203:

“Uh...” I stalled, my mind racing for an excuse.

“Thing is,” he continued, “the boss needs someone to help him with his bandages and medication. Kai’s unavailable today, and I’ve just had a call from my wife—I need to get home to look after the kids. I’m afraid I have to trouble you with this.”

My heart sank with his very first sentence.

I’d only just fled his penthouse this afternoon, the humiliation still fresh. I wasn’t about to quit my job over a few sharp words, but I certainly wasn’t emotionally resilient enough to just bounce back and act like nothing had happened.

“Roy, can’t you find someone else? Can’t a doctor come round? Or hire a proper nurse? I’m not qualified for this.”

Roy was silent for a beat. “But the boss doesn’t like strangers in his home. You know about his... little quirks.”

To my ears, it translated perfectly: The boss has chosen you. You’re his CAO. Do as you’re told.

If it weren't for the fact that Lochlan had been injured saving me—if he hadn't saved my life—I'd have laughed coldly and told him where to shove his job right then and there.

"Fine," I bit out. "I'll come over after I finish dinner."

My appetite for dessert had vanished. I hung up and offered Leo an apologetic smile. "Sorry, I have to go. Work emergency."

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He smiled, understanding as ever. "It's fine. I have to get to work soon anyway."

Right. His night job. I'd forgotten.

We made vague promises to text and meet for coffee again soon, and I left, steeling myself for the second awkward encounter of the day as I headed back to the boss's residence.

Roy was waiting by the lift. The moment I arrived, he made a swift exit, saying, "I'll leave it to you, then," with a look that was a little too innocent.

Standing outside Lochlan's bedroom door, I took a deep, fortifying breath and knocked.

“Come in.”

The man’s voice was as cool and composed as ever. I pushed the door open, closed it behind me, and walked to the foot of the bed, plastering a shallow, professional smile on my face.

“I hear you need your bandages changed.”

Lochlan was silent for a moment. “Yes.”

“Where’s the medical kit? I’ll get it.”

“Over there.” He gestured towards the walk-in wardrobe.

I found the sleek, professional-grade kit and brought it over, placing it on the bedside table. I opened it and began methodically laying out the supplies—gauze, antiseptic, fresh bandages, medical tape. Everything was ready.

It was only then, when I finally let my gaze settle on him, that my brain short-circuited.

A rather critical, and terribly awkward, logistical problem suddenly dawned on me.

His wound was on his lower back. And he was wearing a robe. So... did that mean he had to unbelt? Or just hike the bottom up?

Or... take the whole bloody thing off?

“I thought you were here to administer first aid,” Lochlan said, his tone dry.

Right. No backing out now. I took the plunge.

“You’ll need to take the robe off, then.”

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Chapter 204:

“You’ll need to take the robe off, then.”

I mentally squared my shoulders, deciding to just get on with it and stop overthinking the entire mortifying situation.

Lochlan didn’t move. Not a muscle. He just fixed me with pale, impossibly deep eyes that seemed to see straight through every defence I’d ever erected.

I really didn’t want to meet his gaze, so the moment his eyes touched mine, I quickly looked away, feeling like a scolded child.

He studied my face.

I stared fixedly at his collarbone.

Our attention was completely misaligned.

The seconds ticked by in the silent room. I waited, but he made no move to undress.

A slow, creeping anxiety began to wind its way through me. Oh, for God's sake. He couldn't possibly be expecting... me to undress him, could he?

I finally glanced up, my expression a mess of unspoken questions. I wanted to ask, but I had no idea how to phrase it without sounding utterly insane.

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Finally, feeling like I might suffocate from the tension, I decided to just rip the plaster off.

"I'll do it. I'll help you."

It was just taking off a robe and applying some medicine, for heaven's sake. Better to just get it over with quickly than drag out this excruciating pantomime.

Without waiting for a response, I leaned forward, my hands reaching for the opening of his robe at his chest.

My fingers made contact with the solid wall of his pectorals.

Time seemed to stutter to a halt.

Thump-thump. Thump-thump.

The ridiculously loud, frantic beating of my own heart made my pupils flutter uncontrollably. My brain short-circuited. My hands froze.

My initial plan had been to take the slightly parted front of his robe and simply push it back over his shoulders, but the moment my fingertips registered the warm, hard plane of his chest and my eyes traced the outline of his muscles beneath the dark silk, I was completely derailed.

It was like touching a live wire.

“What, precisely, are you attempting to do?”

A low, husky voice—tinged with confusion and a hint of suspicion—sounded right by my ear, his breath warm and scented with a faint, clean fragrance, ghosting across my cheek.

It was... ticklish. In a way that sent a shiver of awareness straight down my spine to places that had no business being involved in a medical procedure.

I snatched my hands back as if burned. “I’ll, uh... try a different position.”

Lochlan’s eyebrow quirked. “You need a different position?”

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Chapter 205:

I could have sworn I felt internal bleeding. “Not like that! I just mean I need to get your robe off!”

As soon as the words were out, I realised they sounded infinitely worse.

Lochlan let out a soft, low chuckle. “Keep your voice down. There’s no need to be so... eager.”

I. WAS. NOT. BEING. EAGER!

My face felt like it was about to spontaneously combust. And the vaguely amused, long-suffering look on his face only served to make me feel like some kind of hormonal predator.

I drew a sharp breath to explain, then realised any explanation would only dig me deeper into this pit of utter humiliation. I gave up. I simply moved around to the side of the bed, positioning myself behind him.

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That was what I meant by a different position. To get behind him. To get the damn robe off from the back. Aaargh.

I allowed myself a few seconds of silent, internal screaming, then forcibly dragged my mind back to the task at hand. This was about applying medicine. Changing bandages. A purely clinical, utterly innocent procedure.

“Lurking behind me... you aren’t planning to choke me, are you?” Lochlan quipped, his voice dry.

I let out a strained, awkward laugh. No more hesitation.

I reached forward, my hands slipping inside the collar of his robe at the nape of his neck. I tried to be careful, to avoid touching his skin, but it was impossible. My fingers inevitably brushed against the warm column of his neck, the sharp line of his collarbone, the powerful curve of his shoulders and arms.

It wasn’t intentional; it was simply unavoidable.

The robe slid down his torso, pooling at his waist. A vast expanse of smooth, lightly tanned skin filled my vision. Impossibly broad shoulders tapered into a lean waist.

From my angle, I could see the clear definition of his abdominal muscles, the hint of a V-line disappearing enticingly beneath the waistband of his trousers. The perfectly symmetrical muscle definition looked like something carved from marble by a Renaissance master. You could practically feel the latent strength just by looking.

It was a visual feast, my brain supplied, rather unhelpfully.

Now that I was behind him and out of his direct eyeline, I felt myself relax a fraction. I could even allow myself a moment of purely aesthetic appreciation for the “scenery” now on display.

Look but don’t touch, and all that.

Best to get on with the job.

Kneeling on the bed behind him, I leaned forward and carefully began to unwind the bandage wrapped around his lower back. The wound came into view—an angry, scabbed-over gash just above his hip. My breath caught.

My fingers, almost of their own volition, gently traced the skin just beside the injury. This was the mark of the knife. This should be on my body right now.

I had no idea what had been going through his mind when he threw himself in front of me. Was it just innate chivalry? Would he have done it for any employee? Or was it... because it was—

The thought was dangerously alluring.

I picked up the ointment and, using a cotton bud, began to apply it with painstaking care. The salve was cool and thick, and I found myself instinctively blowing on it softly to help it dry, my breath whispering across his skin.

Lochlan went completely still. The muscles in his back, which had been relaxed, gradually began to cord and tighten, rippling under his skin like drawn bowstrings.

I waited until the ointment seemed dry enough, then picked up the fresh bandage. I leaned in close, my arms reaching around his torso as I began to wrap the clean gauze around his waist. My hands and the bandage circled his body, my knuckles brushing against the warm skin of his stomach with each pass.

“That’s enough. Stop.”

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Chapter 206:

Lochlan's voice cut through the quiet, sudden and sharp.

It was rough, gravelly, as if his throat were full of hot sand. The tendons in his neck and arms stood out in stark relief against his skin.

I stopped, the half-wrapped bandage still in my hands. "I'm almost finished... Did I hurt you?" I asked, genuinely confused. I thought I'd been incredibly careful.

Lochlan's expression was a complex mix of severity and something else I couldn't decipher. He brushed my hands aside.

"Get out. I can manage the rest myself."

His voice was cold. His breathing seemed a little too quick.

I just stared at him, a spark of irritation flaring in my chest.

I had been trying so hard, and I was sure my touch had been feather-light. What more did he want? God, he was so difficult to please. Being his Chief of Staff was an absolute nightmare.

Lochlan seemed to realise he'd been too harsh. He glanced at me, his voice softening a fraction. "Go to the kitchen and make me something to eat. Please. I haven't had dinner."

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I thought, Screw this, I'm not your personal chef, but I bit the words back.

I climbed off the bed. My knees, which had been kneeling for so long, had gone completely numb. The moment my feet touched the floor, my legs gave way, and I collapsed in an undignified heap, my hands shooting out to break my fall on the edge of the mattress.

My face came within an inch of planting itself directly in his lap. It was a horrifying déjà vu flashback to that near-identical stumble in the car in Singapore.

I scrambled back so fast I almost gave myself whiplash.

Lochlan started, looking down at me where I knelt by the bed. "What are you doing? Praying?"

I was mortified. “My knees are asleep.”

I sat on the plush carpet, rubbing the pins and needles out of my limbs before hauling myself up and stalking out of the room without another word.

In the kitchen, I opened the refrigerator with a sense of deep resentment.

I figured even if I produced a gourmet banquet, Mr High-and-Mighty would find something to criticise, especially given his monk-like adherence to healthy eating.

With a sigh, I pulled out an assortment of organic greens, cherry tomatoes, and an avocado. Fine. He wanted healthy? He’d get healthy.

But as I assembled the very simple, very virtuous salad, I spotted a bottle of rich, creamy, and undoubtedly calorie-laden Caesar dressing tucked at the back. A slow, wicked smile spread across my face.

Oh, yes.

I drizzled a generous amount over the innocent greens, giving it a thorough toss. There. A salad with a secret sin.

I carried it out to the dining room, where Lochlan was now seated, having emerged from his bedroom.

“I’m a lousy cook,” I announced, placing the bowl before him. “Hope this is okay.”

Lochlan looked at the simple, mostly green salad. He was silent for a few seconds. “Ah. A meal fit for a rabbit on a strict diet.”

“Well, I’m glad it meets with your approval, boss,” I replied, my face arranged into a perfect, plastic smile.

Sarcastic bastard, I thought, my internal eye-roll practically audible. Whatever. You can take it or leave it.

“It’s too much for one person,” he stated. “Get a plate. You can have some.”

“I’m not hungry,” I refused flatly.

The last thing I wanted was to share a plate of insipid salad with him, even if mine had a secret weapon.

My expression must have been obvious. Lochlan looked at me and said, “I apologise.”

I was thoroughly taken aback.

An apology was the last thing I had expected from the man who had just banished me from his presence for the crime of efficient bandage-changing.

A sliver of my irritation, however, promptly packed its bags and left.

“If the salad isn’t to your taste, you don’t have to finish it,” I said, my tone losing a fraction of its earlier edge.

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Chapter 207:

“I was referring to my conduct earlier,” he clarified.

Earlier? My internal monologue screeched to a halt. Which part? The part where he demanded to know why I was “late,” or the part where he went from zero to “get out” in three seconds flat?

He offered no further elaboration, simply returning his attention to the bowl of organic greens with a monastic focus.

I watched him as he finished every last leaf, silent and methodical. Finally, he dabbed his mouth with a linen napkin and looked up.

“It was quite palatable.”

Well. There it was. A five-star review from the most fastidious man in London. All right then.

I couldn’t summon the energy to decipher his cryptic mood swings for a moment longer. “I should be getting home. Good night.”

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I half-expected him to give a curt nod, the official dismissal I was so accustomed to.

Instead, Lochlan simply looked at me, his gaze so protracted and intense I had the sudden, paranoid thought that a piece of avocado had staged a rebellion on my chin.

Just as I was about to crack and demand to know what his particular problem was, he finally spoke.

“In the future, Hyacinth, there is no need for... circumspection.”

He leaned back, the movement careful to avoid straining his injury. “If you need to see me, whether here, at the office, or anywhere else, you are to come and see me. Regardless of who else might be present.”

He paused, his expression turning deadly serious, his eyes like deep water I could drown in. “You have my assurance that your presence will never be a source of inappropriate speculation. Should anyone be foolish enough to question it, I would simply make the nature of our connection clear.”

My mind went momentarily fuzzy.

What was he talking about?

“Make the nature of our connection clear.” Oh, I thought I finally understood.

The real reason for his earlier frustration was my hesitation to visit him at the hospital. He was disappointed in my lack of backbone, that I, his CAO, had been so timid, so concerned with useless propriety when my duty was clear.

I was his employee—his carer, in this instance—and I should have acted as such without wasting mental energy on what people might think.

Understanding that layer made his final point perfectly clear.

He was telling me, in the most polished corporate language possible, that there absolutely would not, could not, be anything between us.

He would never permit the idea of rumours because the reality was so laughably absent.

A hot flush of humiliation washed over me for having ever, even for a second, entertained the opposite notion.

I nodded, my professional mask clicking back into place. “I understand completely. You’re right. It’s my job. There’s no need to invent complications where none exist.”

I cleared the table quickly, said a curt “good night,” and left, the click of the penthouse door behind me sounding like a full stop on the entire embarrassing episode.

Down in the cool night air, I let out a sound that was half-groan, half-scream, muffled by the polite facade of Mayfair. God, the humiliation. It was a physical heat in my veins.

How could I have been so spectacularly stupid?

Those lingering looks I’d catalogued, the low timbre of his voice I’d replayed in my mind—they weren’t signals.

They were just... him. Lochlan’s innate, polished demeanour, the same one he doubtless used with shareholders and waiters.

I hadn’t been special; I’d been self-important.

Later, half-asleep in the deep of the night, I heard the ping of a text message. I rolled over, fumbled for my phone in the darkness, and squinted at the bright screen, my brain swaddled in cotton wool.

It was from Lochlan.

“[Remember to report to work tomorrow. The Henderson files will require your attention.]”

Through the thick haze of sleep, my thumbs were clumsy, useless stumps. I struggled to type a simple reply.

“[Okay, boss. Got it.]”

I hit send, then dropped the phone back onto the duvet, screen-up, and rolled over, falling back into a deep and utterly oblivious sleep.

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Chapter 208:

I changed into my gym kit, the simple act of pulling on a shirt a careful negotiation with the bandage wrapped around my torso.

The home gym was my sanctuary in every property, the one room I insisted on designing to exacting specifications. It was outfitted with professional-grade equipment, all cool steel and muted lighting—a place where order could be forcibly imposed upon chaos.

My workout was thorough, a punishing regime of weights and resistance that strained muscles not compromised by the wound. I pushed myself until my lungs burned and sweat stung my eyes, a physical purge for a mind that refused to be cleansed.

But no amount of exertion could eclipse the memory of tonight—of Hyacinth in my bedroom.

Earlier, when she had stood by the bed and instructed me to remove my robe, my mind, starved of real intimacy for too long, had immediately betrayed me.

I couldn't blame my biology for its reaction. I was alone in my bedroom, on my bed, with the one woman who had occupied my thoughts for months. My libido, a beast I usually kept chained, was roaring to be unleashed.

That was why I had not reacted at first, and she had to repeat the order a second time—her voice a study in clinical efficiency that only made the contrast with my own thoughts more obscene.

Then she said she would need a change of position, and my treacherous brain immediately supplied a catalogue of possibilities. I wondered what she preferred, whether she was traditional or more adventurous, if she had any particular inclinations.

I mentally rebuked myself for such speculation, but I couldn't stop it. This was the woman I had long been planning to ask out, waiting only for the dust of her divorce to settle. Perhaps my chivalry—my consideration—had been a strategic error.

When she moved to sit behind me, every one of my senses sharpened to an unbearable degree.

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I felt the whisper of her breath against my skin, felt her fingers trace the area near the wound and pause for a very, very long time.

What was she thinking in that silence?

And when she circled her arms around my waist to wrap the gauze, her body so close to my back, I felt the undeniable, humiliating truth of my reaction.

If she had shifted a fraction, if her hand had lowered by mistake, she might have sensed it too. The prospect was intolerable.

So I told her to get out.

I knew my brusque manner had likely offended her, but it couldn't be helped. It was the lesser of two evils—far better than letting her see the raw, wanting truth of what she did to me with a single, careless breath.

Later, at the dining table, I had tried to clear the air.

I told her she could visit whenever, wherever, and said, “Should anyone be foolish enough to question it, I would simply make the nature of our connection clear.”

I was waiting for her to ask the obvious question. I was poised to tell her—to use that opening to confess I wanted something beyond boss and employee.

But she didn't ask. She simply accepted it with an infuriatingly grave nod, and then she left.

I stepped out of the gym, slick with sweat, and went straight for a shower.

It was against the doctor's advice with the wound, but I didn't care. I needed cold water. I needed something sharp enough to cut through the heat under my skin.

As I stood beneath the rain shower, the image of her face before she left—flushed with anger—filled my mind. I braced my hands against the tile and forced myself to breathe, to endure the relentless replay of her in my head until it dulled into something I could contain.

Before going to bed, I texted her a simple, necessary instruction to remember to come to work tomorrow. A thread of connection, however professional.

Instead of a text reply, my screen lit up with a video call request from her.

I hesitated for only a second before answering. The screen showed nothing but a vague outline in the dark.

"Hyacinth?" I called out in a low voice.

She mumbled something indistinct and shifted. She was fast asleep.

She had likely pressed the video call button by mistake instead of sending a message.

I should have hung up. It was the proper thing to do.

But I didn't.

I set the phone on the bedside table, propped up against a book, and lay back in bed, watching the dim movement on the screen.

She was a restless sleeper, turning onto her side, then shifting again, sometimes settling on her back with limbs flung wide as if she could not quite find comfort.

She wore a flimsy nightdress that made me uneasy—especially when the blanket slid away from her shoulders. The impulse to reach into the screen and pull it back over her was so strong I actually lifted my hand before I realised the absurdity of the gesture.

She rolled again, kicking at the covers, and a strap slid down. I caught a brief glimpse of bare skin before the fabric shifted back into place. I kept watching anyway, silent and unseen, until eventually my own exhaustion dragged me under.

I woke late.

I usually woke at six-thirty, but this time it was past eight. When I opened the bedroom door, I saw Roy's worried face. He exhaled in a gust of relief, his fist raised mid-knock.

“Thank God,” he said. “I thought something had happened.”

“Good morning, Roy,” I replied, my voice rougher than usual.

He examined my face with frank, avuncular concern. “You look like you had a bad night’s sleep. You have circles under your eyes.”

“I’m perfectly fine,” I said, stepping past him.

There was no need to tell him about the dream I’d had—a vivid, tangled thing of warmth and restraint, of a connection that remained, for now, strictly one-sided.

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Chapter 209:

I woke up late.

The clock on my bedside table glowed with serene, unforgiving red: 8:30.

I was late. Profoundly, career-limitingly late.

I snatched my phone from the bedside table, my thumb jabbing at the power button.

Nothing.

The screen remained a dark, accusatory slab. It had died, the treacherous thing, and taken my alarm with it.

“Oh, for heaven’s sake,” I snarled at the inanimate object, fumbling for the charger. I plugged it in, watching the little red battery icon appear like a taunt.

The moment there was enough juice for it to flicker to life, the screen lit up with a notification that made my blood run cold.

Video Call: Lochlan

Call Duration: 6h 42m

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For a long, horrifying moment, I simply stared.

Six hours and forty-two minutes.

The maths was inescapable, and the conclusion was apocalyptic.

I hadn't just accidentally called my boss last night. I had provided him with an uninterrupted, all-night livestream of my sleep.

The Hyacinth Galloway Sleep Channel. Content included: muffled duvet rustling, potential snoring (God, I hoped not), and the dignified sight of a woman in her late twenties drooling on a pillow.

A sound escaped me—something between a whimper and a scream. The humiliation was a physical heat, crawling up my neck and setting my cheeks on fire.

He'd watched. He must have. The thought was so mortifying I felt dizzy.

The embarrassment curdled quickly into sharp, defensive anger.

Why hadn't he hung up? What kind of man received a clearly accidental video call in the dead of night and just... left it running?

A weird one. A creepy one. A calculating one who now had enough blackmail material to last a lifetime.

I launched into a mad dash. A two-minute shower, hair wrestled into a submission that vaguely resembled a professional chignon, and I threw on the first suit I could grab. I was out the door in fifteen minutes flat, a record fuelled entirely by sheer mortification.

Kai was at his station outside Lochlan's office. He raised a questioning eyebrow, but all he said was, "Good morning."

I replied with a hasty, “Morning,” before leaning in and asking in a hushed voice, “Is the boss in?”

He nodded. “Yeah.” Then he looked pointedly at his watch. “It’s almost nine.” But he added, in a conspiratorial whisper, “Don’t worry. Boss came in late too.”

I steeled myself, then knocked.

“Enter,” came the cool voice from within.

I went inside, and Kai mouthed, “Good luck,” before the door swung shut.

Lochlan was at his desk, impeccably dressed and composed, as if he hadn’t spent the small hours as a passive observer in a one-woman sleep study.

“Sorry I’m late. My phone died,” I said, my voice tight. I tried to see if the mention of my phone would get a reaction out of him.

Nothing. That handsome, clean-shaven face remained as impassive as a Roman statue.

“Apparently, I misdialled a video call last night. A very long one. I must have disturbed your rest,” I added, not sounding apologetic in the least.

He finally lifted his gaze. It was perfectly calm, a deep, unreadable pool.

“It was no disturbance.”

Was it? Really?

“It was a rather lengthy video chat. You didn’t notice?” My tone was pure innocence, but the subtext was screaming: Why in God’s name didn’t you hang up?

He set his tablet down. “I must confess, I did not. I had set my own phone down after sending that text. It seems the call connected without my noticing. A regrettable oversight on both our parts.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 210:

An oversight. He made it sound like a misplaced decimal point, not a violation of my personal privacy on an epic scale.

His politeness was a fortress, and I was hurling myself against its walls with wet spaghetti.

The man was infuriating.

“Right. An oversight,” I repeated. “Well, let’s try to avoid a repeat performance. I’m not sure my REM cycle is compelling viewing.”

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A flicker of something—maybe amusement—crossed his features so quickly I might have imagined it.

“Noted. The Henderson files, if you please.”

The morning passed in a blur of agonising professionalism.

By lunchtime, my nerves were frayed. I fled to the canteen with Kai and Roy, seeking the sanctuary of normal conversation. My mind was preoccupied, and Kai also seemed somewhat distracted.

The burden of conversation fell mostly to Roy, who was glad for the chance, as he had a problem he wanted to consult us on—specifically me.

“She’s only sixteen,” he said, pushing a limp salad around his plate. “This bloke is, what, at least twenty-nine? That’s almost twice her age. And his name is Jett. Jett! What kind of a name is that? Sounds like a household cleaner.”

Kai chuckled. “Wait till she’s eighteen and you find a lad with a motorcycle. You’ll be nostalgic for Jett.”

Roy groaned.

“Kai,” I admonished, “don’t pile on. Roy feels bad enough as it is.”

I'd registered enough to know Roy was talking about his daughter, Hanna—a high schooler who had apparently started seeing a man from outside school. Roy, being a good father, was naturally worried.

He turned to me. "You're a girl, Hyacinth."

I looked down at my blouse. "Last time I checked, yeah."

Kai snorted out a laugh.

"Can you tell me what girls that age are thinking?" Roy continued. "I tried to talk to her. Her mum tried to talk to her. Nothing gives. She's stubbornly set on seeing this Jett character. I'm at my wits' end. I'm afraid if I keep pushing, she might actually run away with him."

I considered this.

What was I doing when I was sixteen?

I was in high school, complaining about literature assignments, hanging out with friends, and yes—thinking about boys.

I'd fallen head over heels for a college-aged boy who dreamed of becoming the world's best pastry chef. I was convinced I would marry him, despite the minor detail that he was failing all his classes.

My parents knew but didn't try to talk me out of it, and I'd forgotten all about pastry-chef boy by the next semester.

"It's just a phase, Roy," I said. "She'll get bored with Jett soon enough and move on to someone else. That is, if you don't keep pressuring her. Teenagers that age are rebellious by nature. The more you try to tell her what not to do, the more she'll do it."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Roy said.

"Don't be. If you leave it alone, she'll eventually grow out of it."

Roy's shoulders sagged with relief. "I hope so."

After a beat, he said, "It's not that I'm against her dating, you know. It's just... he's so old."

I laughed. "True. For a sixteen-year-old, twenty-nine is indeed considered ancient."

“And unsteady. He doesn’t even have a proper job. Hanna says he’s a gig worker. I know that’s just fancy talk for not having a steady income,” Roy complained. “If she’s going to date, why can’t she find someone reliable?”

“Like what kind of guy?” I asked.

“Like...” Roy looked at a loss. Apparently, considering his daughter’s hypothetical dating pool was not a comfortable exercise.

Kai supplied, “Like the boss.”

Roy nodded vigorously. “Boss is brilliant. I’m sure he already had accomplishments even when he was just Hanna’s age. And he’s reliable, always knows what to do, a good influence, smart to boot.”

He must have seen the grimace on my face as he asked, “What, you disagree?”

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